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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM AF

SUBJECT: AFGHAN PARLIAMENT: SELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Classified By: ACTING DCM ANGUS SIMMONS FOR REASONS 1.2 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Begin summary: Both houses of the Afghan Parliament have now selected Deputy Speakers, ending a week of behind-the-scenes horse trading and bargaining for the coveted positions. Although the actual promises may never be fully revealed, the result has been a list of names that reflect both traditional powers in Afghanistan as well as diverse ethnic groups. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In the Meshrano Jirga (upper house), President Karzai's appointee Hamid Gailani was selected as First Deputy. Gailani is the son of Peer Gailani, who reportedly asked the President that his son Hamid (who was an unsuccessful candidate in the Wolesi Jirga election) be appointed to the upper house rather than accepting a position himself. This gives additional influence to the Gailani family. Hamid Gailani's sister is Director of the Afghan Red Crescent, and her husband is Minister of Finance. Two other Gailanis (Seyed Ishaq Gailani from Paktika and Fouzia Gailani from Herat, neither of whom is on warm terms with Peer Gailani's part of the family) are in the Wolesi Jirga as well. If the three Gailani cousins can resolve their family differences, they could form an effective family unit in the Parliament.

¶3. (U) Burhanullah Shinwari, a Pashtun from Jalalabad, was selected as Second Deputy and Aminullah Muzafari was elected as secretary of the Meshrano Jirga.

¶4. (C) In the Wolesi Jirga (lower house), Aref Noorzai received the majority of votes to become First Deputy. Noorzai is a former Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs who reportedly is also deeply involved in the illegal drug trade. Tied by marriage to the Karzai family (his sister is reportedly married to President Karzai's younger brother), Noorzai is a Pashtun MP from Kandahar. Aref Noorzai originally wanted to become Speaker but was unsuccessful in that race. In view of his new position as a Parliamentarian, he may be trying to cleanse his reputation as well. In a meeting with Poloffs last week he spent considerable time repeating talking points written by a friend at the Palace which lamented the dangers of the drug trade in Afghanistan. All present kept straight faces during his anti-poppy presentation.

¶5. (C) Ms. Fawzia Kofi, a Tajik MP from Badakshan, was selected as Second Deputy. She is a former UNICEF employee and a lawyer by training. Her father was a four term Member of Parliament during King Zahir Shah's reign.

¶6. (C) The past few days have seen considerable bargaining among the various power brokers in and around the Parliament. The new speaker of the Wolesi Jirga, Yunus Qanooni, reportedly had to give up his position as head of the Afghanistan-i-Naween Party in order to get much-needed support from Rabbani. Wali Massoud was apparently part of the deal as well, giving up his position as head of the Nezat-i-Islami Party. Both parties are apparently now being folded into the Jamiat-i-Islami Party under Rabbani's leadership. Qanooni was also required, or at least persuaded, to announce publicly that he was no longer in opposition to the government of President Karzai. Poloffs were told last week by ex-Minister of Commerce Sayed Kazemi, a Shiite MP (but of Arab rather than Hazara descent), that he had brokered a reconciliation between Qanooni and the Karzais in order to stave off a take-over by Sayaff. The truth of this may never be known, because the Palace seemed divided in its support for speaker candidates, with various sources claiming that Karzai supported Rabbani, Sayaff and then Qanooni at different times.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Poloff spent the afternoon of the Wolesi Jirga selection lounging next to perennial power-monger and new Meshrano Jirga MP Marshall Fahim at a buzkeshi game. The players whipped and goaded their horses in an effort to grab the coveted sheep skin, some falling from their saddles and others displaying patches of blood. In the VIP seats, however, all was calm and order. Many Afghan politicos were present, comfortably answering phone calls from the Parliament building but seemingly paying more attention to the merits of the horses and the abilities of the players than to the distant selection process for deputy speakers. Whatever wheeling and dealing went on in political circles, it was all done in an Afghan way. The deals will only become apparent as various people are given committee chairmanships

in the Parliament, or as they benefit from other
appointments. END COMMENT.
NEUMANN